

2400 Ohio Blvd.

THURSDAY, JULY 10, 2014

SERVING TERRE HAUTE AND THE WABASH VALLEY

"MR. BLANDINGS BUILDS HIS DREAM HOME"

HOLLYWOOD HOME

Historic Ohio Boulevard house inspired by 1948 Cary Grant movie



Tribune-Star/Jim Avelis

Ours now: The Sponsler family has lived in the Blandings' "Dream Home" for about 10 years. Here, Bryan sits outside the Ohio Boulevard home.



Inside today's issue

■ See the cover story of today's BASH inside the Tribune-Star for information on the showing of "Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream Home," a 1948 movie starring Cary Grant, Myrna Loy and Melvyn Douglas, and to learn how to buy tickets for a tour/pool party of a "dream home" built in Terre Haute.

Structure to be featured as part of Vigo County Historical Society fundraiser

BY HOWARD GRENINGER
TRIBUNE-STAR

Spurred in 1948 by a newly released movie starring Cary Grant and Myrna Loy, coupled with a growing post-World War II housing market, General Electric partnered with Hollywood's RKO Studios to build "dream homes" throughout the country.

Seventy-six dream homes were built, including one at 2400 Ohio Blvd. in Terre Haute. That home, based on the movie "Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House," will be featured this month in a home tour/pool party as part of a fundraiser for the Vigo County Historical Society.

Newlin-Johnson Develop-

ment was the contractor on the project, which agreed to build the home according to architectural specifications from RKO Studios.

"It was built before I joined the firm," said John T. Newlin, whose father founded Newlin-Johnson Co. Inc. in 1932. "They used steel framing for the house that was made locally at the former Stran Steel company. During the war, that company built Quonset huts for the Army and Navy." John Newlin is chairman of the board of directors of the company.

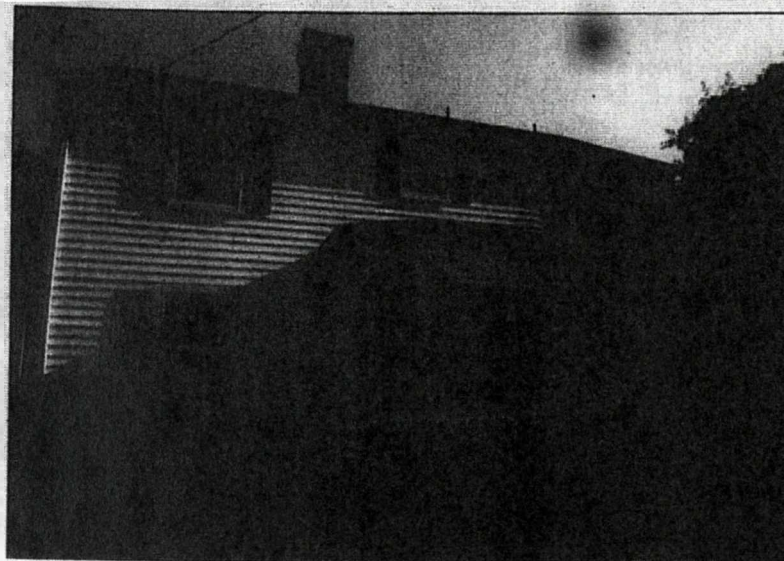
It was the only dream home built with a steel frame, said Marylee Hagan, executive director of the Vigo County Historical Society.

► Turn to HOME, A5



Tribune-Star/Jim Avelis

Original: The fixtures in two of the bathrooms in the Sponslers' home are original to the structure. The long bulbs aren't fluorescent, but tungsten, with a very long filament.



Tribune-Star/Don Auerbach

Bay window: The backside of Bryan Sponsler's home has a large bay window that looks out from the dining room area.

Home: House came with original blueprints

► Continued from A1

Indiana had two other sites for the dream homes, one in Indianapolis and a second in South Bend. RKO's architectural plans had several designs, including ranch-style homes, to fit different sections of the country.

Concrete was used for the flooring of the Terre Haute dream house. An Oct. 9, 1948, newspaper account states that concrete "was poured upon a corrugated metal base which was mounted on the structural Stran Steel joists. The floors were poured to a thickness of 2 inches. The flooring is vermin proof, sound proof and termite proof."

Footings and walls of the house are reinforced concrete, 12 inches thick.

"It is a fortress. Except for commercially built buildings, there is nothing stronger" in Terre Haute, said Bryan Sponsler, who now owns the house with his wife, Catherine.

"The only time you hear anything is when someone is walking up or down the stairs," Sponsler said, as the stairs are made of wood.

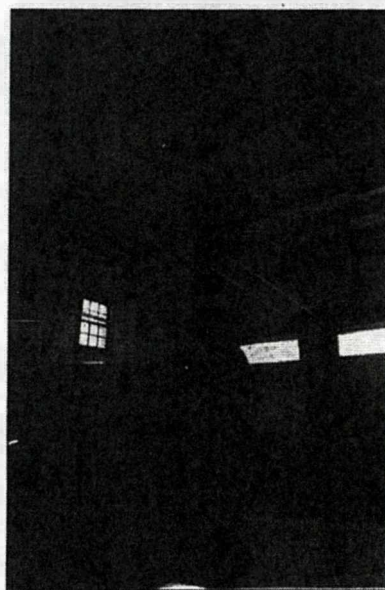
Sponsler, who purchased the home in 2004, said it came with the original "Mr. Blandings" blueprints.

Yet what may have fascinated most who toured the home in 1948 were GE's newest home electronics, including automatic washer and dryer, two temperature refrigerator, range, 8-foot home freezer, dishwasher, a sink combination complete with a disposal unit, cabinets, a flat plate ironer, water heater, vacuum cleaner and radio.

The home also included an intercom system called "Teletalk" as well as an electric Westminster door bell chime. Sponsler said he recently discovered a company that still makes replacement parts, and so he plans to restore the chimes. In addition, the home featured central heating and cooling.

"At the open house, it was arranged that tickets would be sold by a sorority," Newlin said. "It was quite something," Newlin said, "and it has proven to be an excellent home."

The open house was held Oct. 10, 1948, and members



Tribune-Star/Don Auerbach

Metal: The joists and studs in the Blandings home are metal. Here, owner Bryan Sponsler poses in the garage with the exposed joists overhead. The original promotion touted the resident's being able to open the garage door with just a push of a button on the dash of a car.

of Tri Kappa Sorority, chartered in 1921, served as hostesses. "Their job will call for poise, patience and a fund of knowledge about the model home and its furnishings in anticipation of the many questions which will be put to them by the inquisitive visitors," the newspaper account states.

The showing of the dream home was a community event with tickets costing 25 cents to tour the home. Of that price, 21 cents went to the Community Chest, the forerunner of the United Way of the Wabash Valley. The remaining 4 cents went to federal taxes.

As keepsakes, match books were distributed. The inside of the match book listed the 28 companies that worked to bring the home together, supplying plumbing, painting, plaster, furnishings, steel frames and concrete, to

components purchased at Industrial Supply.

Sponsler said he had no idea the home was a "dream home" when he and his wife purchased it. "Funny, right after finding out about the house, I went to Sam's and there as a DVD two movie pack of Cary Grant, with 'Mr. Blandings' as one of the movies," Sponsler said.

The Historical Society's executive director said a home tour is planned with a 1940s theme. Greeters are to be dressed in period clothing. Also, the society hopes to have a period vehicle parked in the driveway, just like with the 1948 tour.

That vehicle, a dark green Packard Custom Eight touring sedan, according to a newspaper account, "was equipped with a button on the instrument panel which, when pressed, opens the garage door without entailing the driver's moving from the car or any extra effort."

"It really was a model home, but [it would] cost a fortune to build a home like that now," Sponsler said, adding the home also has electrical conduit for all wiring.

Sponsler is the fourth owner of the home. He said the original owners were Sam Smith and his wife, who owned the former Smith's Department Store at the corner of Fourth Street and Wabash Avenue.

His son and wife, Solomon and Jane Smith, then owned the home. They sold the home in 1988 to Daniel and Donna Wolfe, who own Wolfe's Auto Auction. The Wolfes in 1995 added a concrete outdoor pool and pool house in the backyard.

Reporter Howard Gerninger can be reached at 812-231-4204 or hogand.gerninger@tribstar.com.

TODAY'S SATURDAY

9AM	4-H Dairy Cattle Show
10AM-9PM	4-H Open Class & Exhibits Open
11AM	4-H Beef Cattle Show

"Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House"



In 1948, the "dream house" came to life in 76 cities across the country and one is right here in Terre Haute at 2400 Ohio Blvd. RKO Studios worked with local contractors & businesses to build a house according to the plans drawn up for the movie version of the home, bringing with it the dreams of "modern living" to residents of the Wabash Valley.

Sunday, July 20th
2:00pm FREE SHOWING
"Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House" film at The Community Theatre (25th & Washington)
4:00pm \$40 VIP Dream House Tour & Pool Side Party at 2400 Ohio Blvd

Get your VIP Tickets at the Vigo County Historical Museum (1411 S. 6th St) or call 812-235-9717, or www.vchsmuseum.org.

Sponsler's Allstate Insurance
Century 21
Aames Title & Closings
Hulman & Company
Honey Creek Vigo Title Services
TLC Team of Century 21
RE/MAX Real Estate
Tribune Star

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2400 Ohio Blvd.

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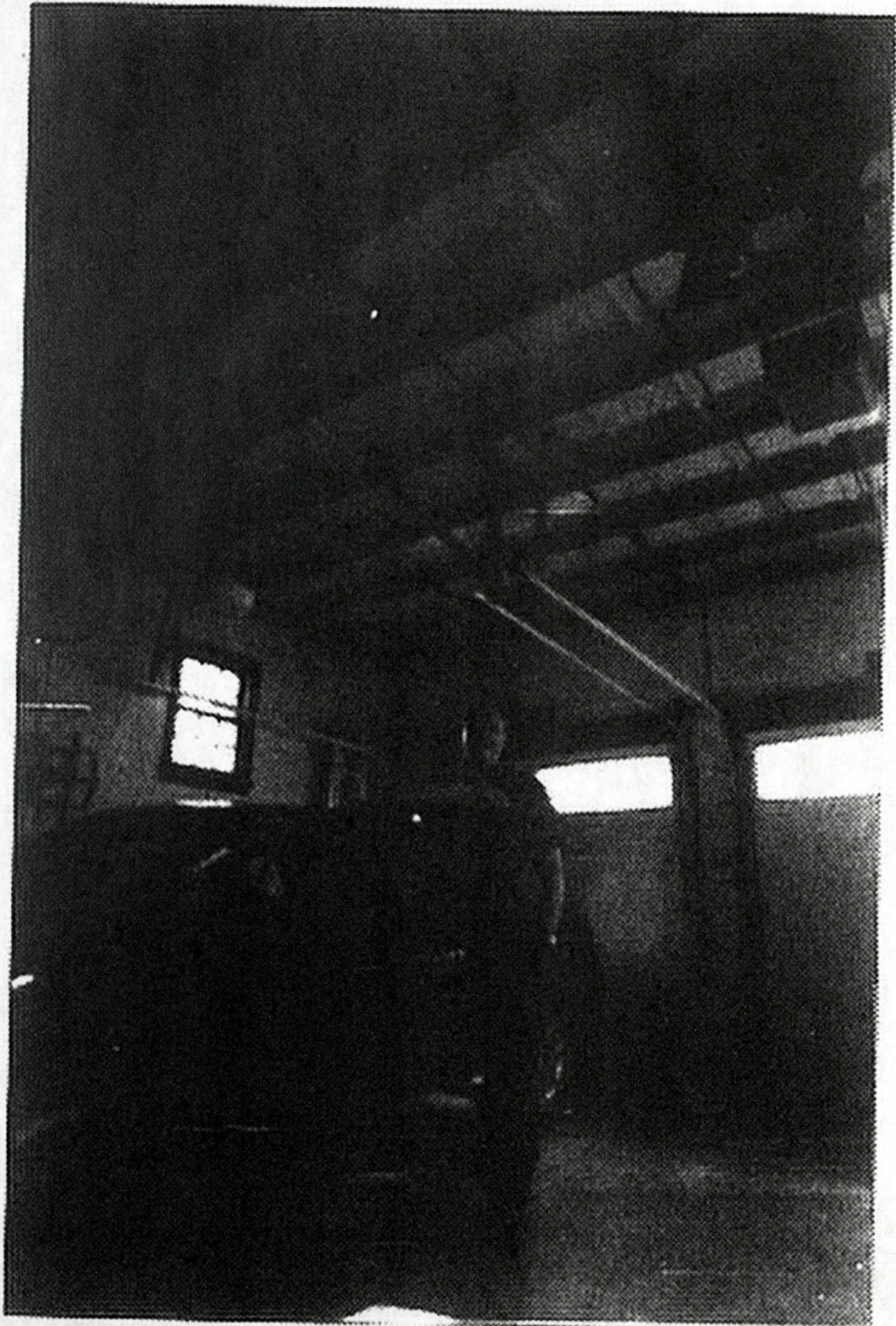
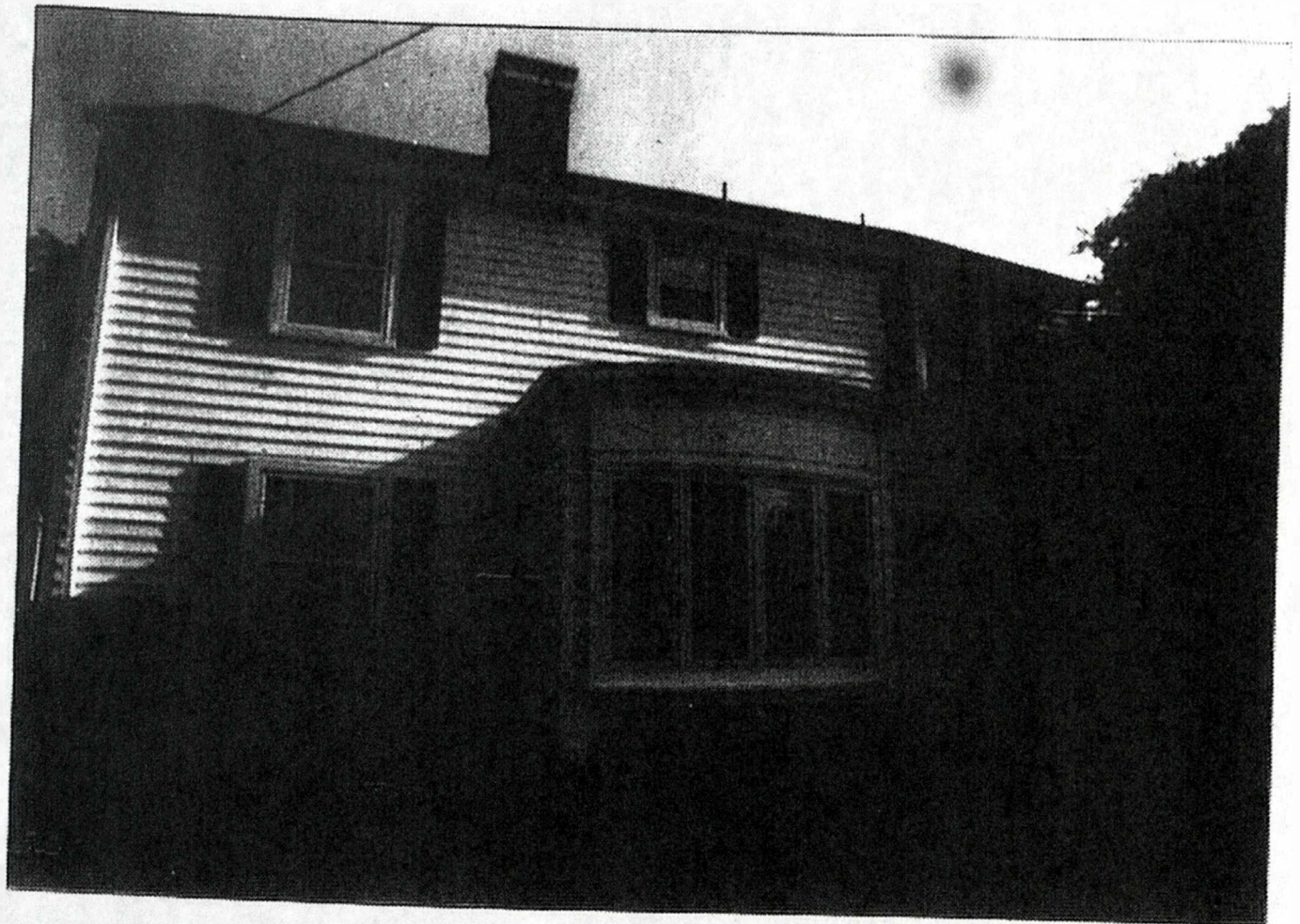


Photo by Mr. [illegible]

Metal

2400 Ohio Blvd.



Bill Wender

Tribune Star Inc. Arch.

2400 Ohio Blvd.



Original - 100% of 100%



CONDIT HOUSE



INDIANA STATE UNIVERSITY



Helen Condit

Condit House, the official residence of the President of Indiana State University, was constructed in 1860. It has been part of the campus scene since the University's inception. The house and property were bequeathed to the University in 1963 by its owner, Helen Condit, the last member of a distinguished pioneer family in Indiana.

When the institution (then Indiana State Normal School) was chartered by the General Assembly in 1865, Condit House was already five years old. During the subsequent 120 years the University expanded and developed to surround this distinctive landmark originally situated across Mulberry Street from the campus.

Condit House was built by Jabez Hedden for Lucien Houriet, a local jeweler and watchmaker. The Reverend Blackford Condit and his wife, Sara Louisa Mills Condit, who were then married only one year, purchased the house from Houriet in 1863. Their infant twins, Charles and Charlotte, died at about the time the family moved into the house. Other children born to the Condits were Sarah (1864), Emma (1865), Howe Allen (1868), Blackford (1871), Helen (1874), and Joseph Dayton (1877).

Sara Louisa Condit was the daughter of Caleb Mills, "Father of the Indiana Public School System." Mills was a frequent visitor to Condit House during his tenure as the second Indiana Superintendent of Public Instruction and throughout his distinguished career as a professor at Wabash College.

Possession of the home passed to daughter Helen Condit who lived her entire life in Condit House. She was reported to be a quiet, beautiful woman, in youth and age. She never married. Upon her death in 1962, the home was given to the University.



Prior to its restoration, the House was occupied for three years, 1963-1966, by the Office of Alumni Affairs and the Indiana State University Foundation. At the request of Dr. Alan Carson Rankin, seventh President of the University (1965-1975), the Indiana State University Board of Trustees authorized restoration of Condit House for use as the residence of the President.

Restoration of Condit House, begun in 1966, emphasized the reconstruction and enlargement of the rear wing. Careful attention was given to the preservation of the home's architectural authenticity. Bricks taken from the house were used in the enlarged rear wing, and the original doors, window frames, lintels, sills, and shutters were restored. Restoration was completed in 1967.

Condit House, an excellent example of Italianate architecture, has been preserved in its original character. Its brick and wood trim facade gives the house an unpretentious formality and quiet dignity.

One of the distinctive features of the architecture is the deep pavilion at the front center of the house which is surmounted by a classic pediment. On both sides of the pavilion are wooden porches. A balcony of wood and classic iron filigree overhangs the front entrance. The two large entrance doors are oak.

The house is crowned by a hip roof, projecting eaves, and two great chimneys. The eaves are supported by carved wood brackets. The pavilion is gabled with a triangular peak. Stone beehives ornament the front of the house.

Two floor-to-ceiling windows on the first floor and three windows of similar size and shape on the upper level afford a pleasant view of the campus quadrangle. The upper-floor windows, above and on either side of the entrance doors, still have some of the original glass panes, which are now aged to a pale blue.



The original steps leading to the entrance of the house were replaced in 1985 by three large pieces of Indiana limestone.

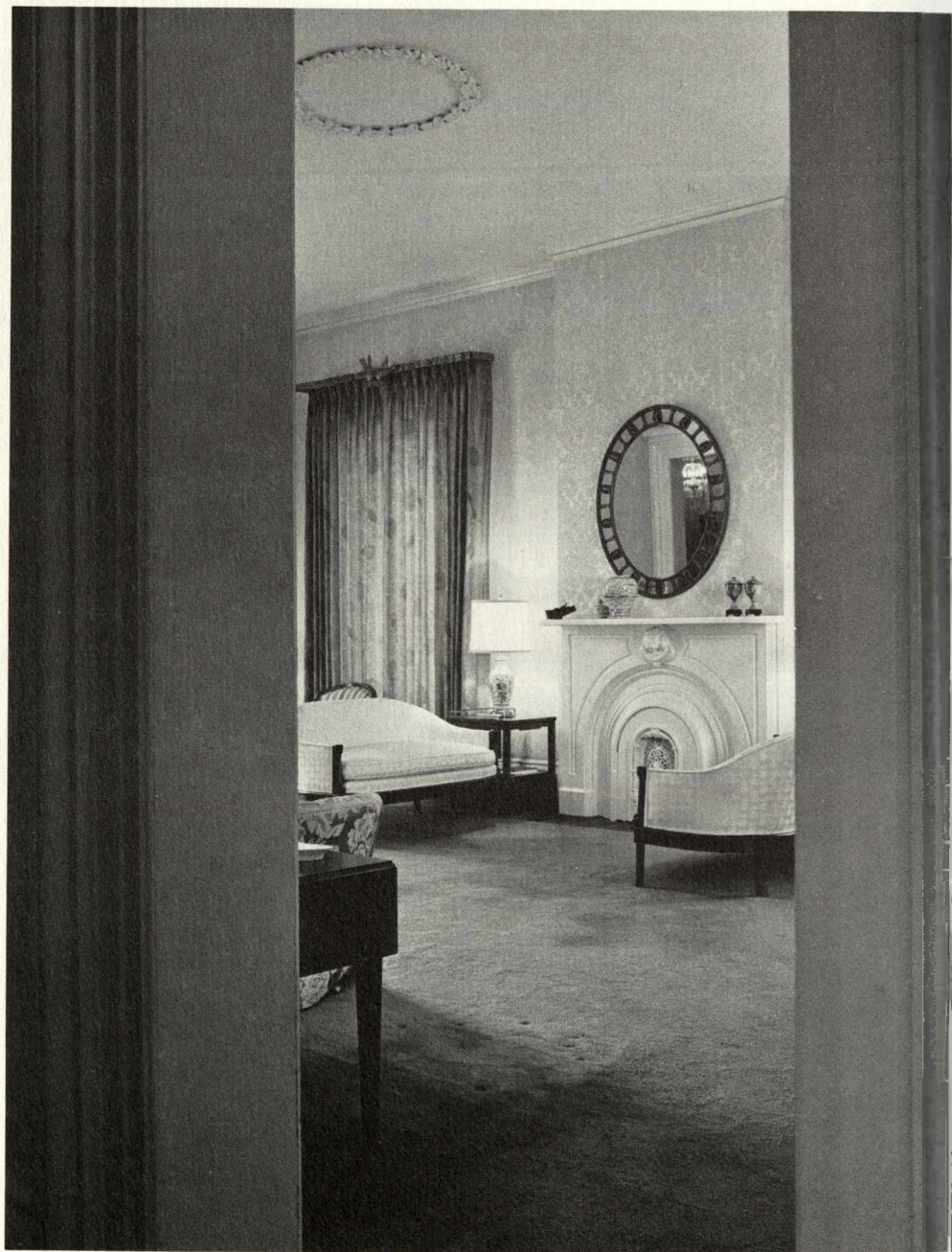
An old well pump, sheltered by a wooden gazebo, is located on the west side of the rear wing of Condit House. An adjacent building located on the south side was thought to be a wash house or summer kitchen. It had two floors and four rooms, one of which included a three-hole facility. The building was razed in 1983 to accommodate a house garage.

Just inside the front doors is a small entry room and a second pair of oak and glass doors. Within the entry and in the right wall is a mail delivery slot. When used by the Condits, the first doors were fully opened and the second doors served as the entrance in all but winter weather.

The glass panels in the entrance doors are of especial interest. Prior to renovation one of the original, etched panes was cracked. A replacement, which proved to be a frosted copy of the original, was found in one of the two cloak closets at the front of the House. The etched glass panes above the frames of both sets of doors are original. The outer pane is numbered 629, the original Mulberry Street address of the house.

The second front doors and the cherry wood balustrade of the open stairway were painted in 1963. The paint was removed and the original oak and cherry woods were returned to their natural colors in 1975.

The stairway in the foyer leads to the upstairs hall. Originally anchored only a few inches into the wall, the stairway had to be shored up during the restoration. The space beneath was walled in and serves as a storage closet.



The ceilings throughout the original sections of Condit House are approximately twelve feet high. The house has five fireplaces. Over the years, each has been closed so none are operational today.

The corner cabinet in the sitting room was taken from the original dining room. The foxhead chandelier in the study is presumed to be more than a century old. The gold painted wood valances in the drawing room are thought to be original.

Since its designation as the residence of the University President, Condit House has received several gifts which add to its interest for visitors and guests:

The furnishings in the upstairs guest room were owned by Mr. and Mrs. Anton Hulman, Sr., distinguished citizens of Terre Haute. They are on permanent loan to Condit House by Mrs. Anton (Mary) Hulman, Jr.

The grandfather clock in the front hallway is a gift of the Indiana State University Council. More than a century old, it stood for many years in the Lobby of the Deming Hotel, Terre Haute.

The Steinway piano in the drawing room, also more than one hundred years old, once belonged to the Alice Longworth family of Cincinnati.

The dining room table, breakfront, serving cabinet, and side tables in the dining room and entrance hallway were acquired through the Condit House Gift Fund created by the University's 1967 Senior Class.

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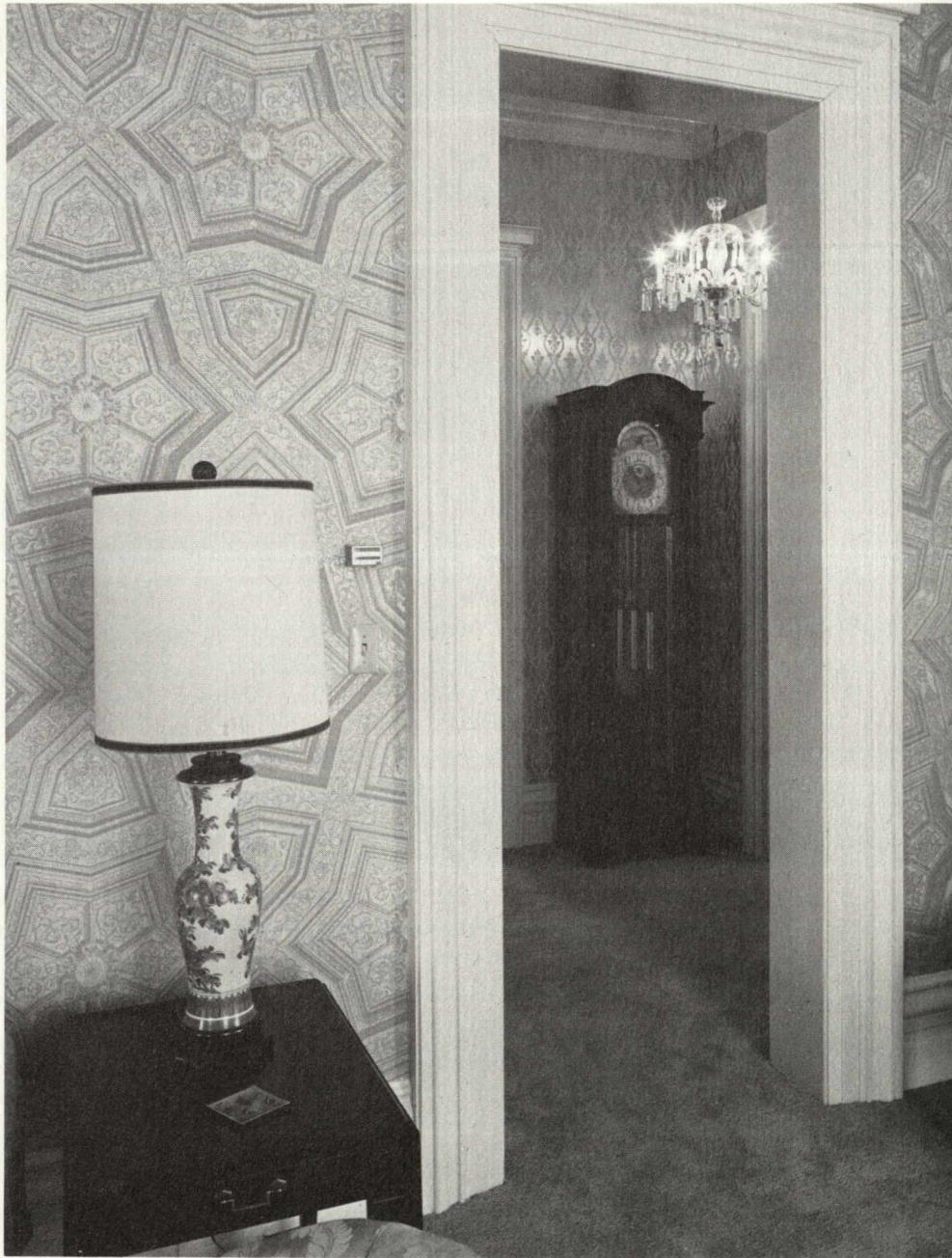
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In addition to its use as the family residence of the University President, Condit House serves as guest quarters for many visiting official visitors and dignitaries. It is also the setting for numerous University receptions, dinners and special events throughout the year.

A symbol of the University's long and distinguished history of educational service to the people of Indiana, Condit House links the thought and culture of the past to the promise of the present and future.

Condit House is registered as an Historic American Building with the Library of Congress and the Smithsonian Institution.